

REMARKS

The disclosure stands objected to because “rug grooves” should be identified as “lug grooves.” In response, Applicant amended the disclosure as suggested by the Examiner, and requests withdrawal of the objection to the disclosure on this basis.

Claims 1-9 also stand objected to because “rug grooves” should be “lug grooves.” In response, Applicant amended the claims as suggested by the Examiner, and requests withdrawal of the objection on this basis.

Claims 1-3 and 6-9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Fujikawa (JP 01-178006) in view of Graas (U.S. Patent No. 4,574,856) and Landers et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,450,223). In response, Applicant amended independent claim 1 to clarify features of the inner groove part, and respectfully traverses the rejection based on the amendment.

Claim 1 is amended to include the features of claims 3 and 4. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that based on the features added from dependent claim 4, the rejection is overcome and should be withdrawn.

In addition to the above reason, the first main see-through groove is now defined to extend linearly in a circumferential direction of the tire, and the second main see-through groove is defined as extending zigzag in the circumferential direction of the tire.

Moreover, claim 1 now defines the lug grooves as each including a first lug groove extending from the first main see-through groove to the second main see-through groove and a second lug groove extending from the second main see-through groove to at least the ground contact end of the tire.

The first lug groove comprises an inner groove comprising an inner groove part extending from the first main see-through groove to the narrow circumferential groove and an outer groove part extending from the narrow circumferential groove to the second main see-through groove. The inner groove part comprises a one side end groove portion communicating with the first main see-through groove, the other side end groove portion communicating with the second main see-through groove, and an intermediate groove portion.

The intermediate groove portion extends between the one side end groove portion and the other side end groove portion, and has a smaller inclination to the tire circumferential direction than the one side end groove portion and the other side end groove portion. Additionally, the narrow circumferential groove has a smaller width than the first and second main see-through grooves. None of the Fujikawa, Graas, or Landers references, alone or in combination, discloses or suggests the above features now recited in amended claim 1. For this additional reason, withdrawal of the §103(a) rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 4 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Fujikawa in view of Graas and Landers, and further in view of Ochi et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,571,844). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection as it applies to amended claim 1 for the reasons recited above with respect to the rejection of independent claim 1.

As discussed above, according to the present invention the inner groove part of the first lug groove comprises a one side end groove portion communicating with the first main see-through groove and the other side end groove portion communicating with the

second main see-through groove. The intermediate groove portion extends between the one side end groove portion and the other side end groove portion, wherein the intermediate groove portion has a smaller inclination to the tire circumferential direction than the one side end groove portion on the other side end groove portion. Thus, by the intermediate groove portion have a smaller inclination of the tire circumferential direction, an enhancement of anti-side slip performance in inclement conditions can be achieved.

More specifically, since the tread surface region where the inner groove part is located is provided closer to the tire equatorial plane CL than the tread surface region in which the outer groove part is located, a ground contact length of the tread surface in the tire circumferential direction becomes longer than the tread surface region in which the inner groove part is located. Thus, by forming not the outer groove part, but the inner groove part located in the tread surface region to have a longer ground contact length in the manner discussed above, a higher anti-slide slip performance of the tire is achieved. Since Ochi alone, or in combination with Fujikawa, Graas, and Landers fails to disclose or suggest these features and advantage, withdrawal of the §103(a) rejection as it applies to amended claim 1 is respectfully requested.

Claim 5 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Fujikawa in view of Graas and Landers, and further in view of Hasegawa et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,435,364) and Nakagawa (U.S. Patent No. 5,373,882). In response, Applicants traverse the rejection for the reasons recited above with respect to the rejection of independent claim 1.

Since claim 5 depends upon claim 1, it necessarily includes all of the features of its associated independent claim plus other additional features. Thus, Applicant submits that the §103 rejection of claim 5 has also been overcome for the same reasons as mentioned above to overcome the rejection of independent claim 1, and also because Hasegawa and Nakagawa fail to overcome the deficiencies of Fujikawa, Graas, and Landers. Applicant respectfully requests that the §103(a) rejection of claim 5 also be withdrawn.

New claim 10 is added and further defines the outer groove part as having the same inclination to the tire circumferential direction as the one side end groove portion and the other side end groove portion of the inner groove part. Applicant respectfully requests allowance of new claim 10 for the reasons recited above with respect to the rejection of independent claim 1, and also based on the features recited in this claim.

For all of the foregoing reasons, Applicant submits that this application is in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney if an interview would expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,
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